

REMARKS

By this Amendment, claims 1 and 2 are amended and claims 34-36 are canceled. Thus, claims 1-33 and 37-56 are pending, with claims 1, 18, 37, 55 and 56 being independent claims. In view of the cancellation of claims 34-36, the rejection of claims 34-36 in Item 5 of the Office Action is moot and is not discussed further herein.

I. Claims 1-33 and 37-56

Item 2 of the Office Action rejects claims 1-10, 12-24, 26-32, 37-44, 46-52 and 54-56 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent Application 2004/0065729 to Ranard et al. in view of U.S. Patent Application 2002/0179708 to Zhu et al. Item 3 of the Office Action rejects claims 11, 25 and 45 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Ranard in view of Zhu and U.S. Patent 6,510,993 to Kiekhäfer. Item 4 rejects claims 33 and 53 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Ranard in view of Zhu and U.S. Patent 5,590,779 to Ramsey.

In the attached Declaration under 37 C.F.R. 1.131, the inventors assert that they conceived and actually reduced to practice the invention as set forth in claims 1-33 and 37-56 before June 28, 2002. Evidence is provided in support of these assertions, and Applicant requests that the Examiner review the Declaration in detail. In view of the Declaration and supporting evidence, Applicant submits that the inventors of this application conceived and reduced to practice the claimed invention before the earliest possible effective date of Ranard, i.e., June 28, 2002. Applicant does not concede that Ranard teaches or suggests all of the features of any of the pending claims, nor does Applicant concede that the entire disclosure of the Ranard application is entitled to the June 28, 2002 priority date. However, since the inventors invented the subject matter of claims 1-33 and 37-56 before June 28, 2002, Ranard is not prior art to these claims under any section of 35 U.S.C. 102.

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Amendment dated
Reply to Office Action of June 30, 2005

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Accordingly, the rejection of claims identified above is overcome and should be withdrawn.

In view of the above amendment, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

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Enclosure: Declaration

Respectfully submitted,

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